

Four Hundred Silent Years

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"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts." (Malachi 3:1)



Bust of Alexander the Great;
in the Capitoline Museum, Rome.

Subsequent to seventy years of Babylonian domination a remnant of the children of Israel return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. A brief period of reformation and relative revival break out under the guiding hands of Ezra and Nehemiah. This duration of dedicated worship of Jehovah is short lived and devotion soon decays into superficial ceremony. Malachi preaches the imminent advent of the Messiah to the people of the Jews. It is the Lord's last call to repentance until four hundred years later when John the Baptist is found preaching in the wilderness of Judaea. The Old Testament Scripture is sealed and the children of Israel are thrust into a period of time that has come to be known as, the "**Four Hundred Silent Years**".

The Lord did not speak directly via a "holy man of God" as moved by the Holy Spirit" in the dispersion of this time, but He did speak of it. History verifies the astonishing accuracy of the then future events the Lord revealed to the prophet Daniel concerning this period.

At the onset of the *silent years*, the chosen people enjoyed a largely

independent life under the lenient rule of the Persian kings. The government of the people was entrusted to the Jewish high priest, whose lineage is traced from Joshua up to Jaddua in the twelfth chapter of Nehemiah.¹

The Medo-Persian empire was swiftly approaching its carnage. This great "Bear" of Daniel chapter seven was to be suddenly subdued by the "Four Winged Leopard". Daniel's vision precisely predicted the lightning like rapidity with which Alexander the Great would conquer the then known world and establish The Grecian Empire.

Alexander the Great

Daniel's prophetic vision of the "Two Horned Ram" and the "He Goat with a Notable Horn" in chapter eight provides a more detailed account of this transition of gentile world power.

"Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great." (Daniel 8:3-4)

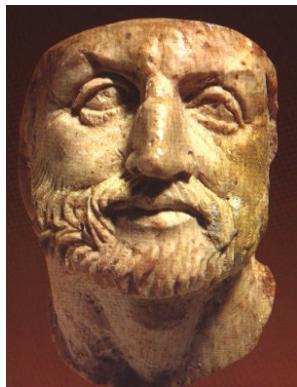
"And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a

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notable horn between his eyes. And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power.

And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand. (Daniel 8:5-7)

Daniel chapter eight and verse twenty definitely states, "The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia." These kings were Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian. The latter being the dominant force (horn) of the empire.² Verse twenty one reveals, "And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king."



Philip II, King of Macedonia
(360-337)

* Archaeological Museum, Thessaloniki.



* Pictured is a section of a mosaic discovered at Pompeii. Alexander appears astride his cherished steed Bucephalus, at the battle of Issus, where he defeated Darius III, King of Persia.

This first king was none other than Alexander the Great. Prior to Alexander's conquests, his father Philip II, king of Macedonia, had forged the Macedonians into a unified military state.³ He had organized a potent army of rugged peasants and shepherds and in twenty years time succeeded in making the Greek city-states subservient to Macedonia. When Philip II died in 337 B.C. he had formalized an alliance with the Greeks and anticipated the conquest of Asia.

Alexander manifested a magnification of his father's aggressive military genius. He had been brought up on Homer's *Iliad* under the tutelage of Aristotle and was deeply ingrained with Hellenic ideals. His campaigns greatly accelerated the Hellenizing of the East and

effectively introduced Greek culture and language over a geographic range of 1.5 million square miles.⁴

In 334 B.C. he crossed the Hellespont into Asia Minor and defeated the Persians at the battles of the Granicus River (334 B.C.), and the Issus of Cilicia (333 B.C.).⁵ Possessing command of all Asia Minor, he swerved south down into Syria and took the *poleis* (city-states) of Damascus, Sidon, Tyre and Gaza. Alexander continued on to Egypt, where he founded the famed city of Alexandria.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, relates an intriguing story concerning Alexander's encounter with God's people shortly after his siege of Tyre. During the siege he had sent to the Jewish high priest a request

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for provisional supplies. He was enraged by the denial of his request and threatened an expedition against Jerusalem.

Jaddua the high priest was in terror over the threat and ordained the people should make supplication to God for their protection. God revealed to him in a dream that the people were to take courage, adorn the city, open the gates and present themselves before their probable conqueror. The people were to dress in white and Jaddua and his order in priestly habit.

Alexander reached the perimeter of the city and witnessed this entourage of Jerusalem coming out to greet him. His army, assuming an occasion for great pillage and plunder, were shocked when Alexander approached alone and saluted the high priest. Supposing him momentarily deranged, one of the men questioned his adoration of the high priest. Alexander replied:

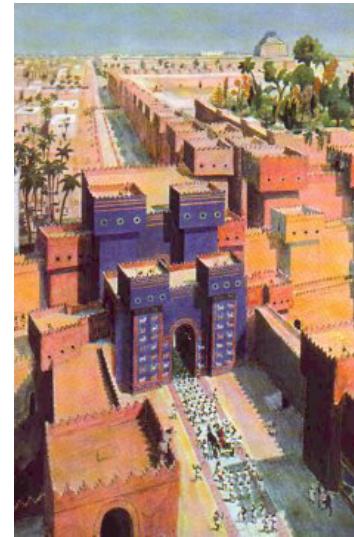
"I did not adore him, but that God who hath honored him with that high priesthood; for I saw this very person in a dream, in this very habit, when I was at Dios, in Macedonia, who, when I was considering with myself how I might obtain the dominion of Asia, exhorted me to make no delay, but boldly to pass over the sea thither, for that he would conduct my army, and would give me the dominion over the Persians; whence it is, that having seen no other in that habit, and now seeing this person in it, and remembering that vision and

*the exhortation which I had in my dream, I believe that I bring this army under the divine conduct, and shall therewith conquer Darius, and destroy the power of the Persians, and that all things will succeed according to what is in my own mind."*⁶

Alexander was extremely pleased with the prophecies of Daniel shown him and bestowed great favors on the priests and people. Regardless of the probability of this story, God's providence is evident in the fact that Jerusalem was not sacked, nor the Jews spoiled during Alexander's epoch.

Having subdued Syria and Egypt, he headed east and the Persian army suffered final defeat at the battle of Gaugamela (331 B.C.). In rapid succession Babylon and the capitals of Persia, Susa and Persepolis also fell.

Alexander consolidated his empire during the next three years and then completed further



* Watercolor of Ancient Babylon by W. Anger
Front: Procession Street
Center: Ishtar Gate
Top Right Horizon: the Etemenaki
which means...
"The House of the Foundation of Heaven and Earth"
...also known as the Tower of Babel

campaigns into India extending the borders of his domain to the Indus river (326 B.C.).⁷

Alexander returned to Babylon and prepared to invade Arabia, but Daniel's prophecy foretold another fate.

"Therefore he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken: and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven."
(Daniel 8:8)

The great horn, Alexander, at the summit of his strength was broken. Ravaged by the diseases of pleasure and the wounds of war, he died in 323 B.C., at the age of 32 years and 8 months. His twelve year reign of remarkable achievement and marvelous conquests were over.



Astronomical diary describing
The Battle of Gaugamela
* British Museum, London.

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Diadoch Dynasties

"Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power." (Dan. 8:22)

The notable ones that came up in place of the great horn were four of Alexander's most ruthless generals: *First*, Cassander ruled Macedonia and Greece. *Secondly*, Lysimachus held Thrace and western Asia Minor. *Thirdly*, Ptolemy maintained sovereignty of Egypt, Palestine and Arabia. *Fourthly*, Seleucus ultimately took control of Syria from Antigonus ("Cyclops" the one-eyed), an older and trusted general whom Alexander had made governor of Phrygia.

Antigonus attempted to reconstitute the whole of the

empire under his sole rule. Alarmed by this prospect, Cassander, Lysimachus, Ptolemy and Seleucus formed a coalition to oppose the growing power of old Cyclops. In 301 B.C. at the Battle of Ipsus, the joint armies of Lysimachus and Seleucus prevailed and Antigonus was killed. Thus, the Diadochi (Greek for "successors") literally divided Alexander's empire toward the four winds, significantly weakening its consummate power.

The most relevant of the Diadochi to this treatise were the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt, founded by Ptolemy I Soter in 323 B.C., with its capital in Alexandria, and the Seleucid dynasty in Syria, founded by Seleucus I Nicator in 312 B.C., with its capital in Antioch.

* Ptolemy I, "Soter," turned Egypt into his personal domain.



* Seleucus I, "Nicator," continued Alexander's Hellenizing policies.



Ptolemies and Seleucids of Daniel's 11:5-35 Prophecy

PTOLEMIES of EGYPT

SELEUCIDS of SYRIA

"Kings of the South"	Reign B.C.	"Kings of the North"	Reign B.C.
Ptolemy I Soter (Daniel 11:5)	323 - 285	Seleucus I Nicator (Daniel 11:5) *	312 - 281
Ptolemy II Philadelphus (Daniel 11:6)	285 - 246	Antiochus II Theos (Daniel 11:6)	262 - 246
Ptolemy III Euergetes (Daniel 11:7-8)	246 - 221	Seleucus II Callinicus (Daniel 11:7-9)	246 - 227
Ptolemy IV Philopator (Daniel 11:11-12, 14-15)	222 - 204	Seleucus III Soter (Daniel 11:10)	227 - 223
Ptolemy V Epiphanes (Daniel 11:17)	204 - 181	Antiochus III the Great (Daniel 11:10-11, 13, 15-19)	223 - 187
Ptolemy VI Philometer (Daniel 11:25)	181 - 145	Seleucus IV Philopator (Daniel 11:20)	187 - 176
		Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Daniel 11:21-32)	175 - 163

* Seleucid King Antiochus I Soter who reigned 281 - 262 B.C. is not referred to by Daniel.

Constant hostility brewed between the Seleucidae of Syria and the Ptolemies of Egypt. The coastal plain of Sharon became a corridor along which the armies of these two powers marched to war.⁸ The eleventh chapter of Daniel gives a prophetic summary of these conflicts for a century and a half after the battle of Ipsus. The chart (this page) illustrates the chain of rulers referred to by Daniel.⁹

Seleucid and Ptolemy dissension kept Palestine between the hammer and the anvil. Many Jews had been exported under the first Ptolemy rule to Egypt

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Naked athletes participating in a foot race are pictured on this 6th-century B.C. vase. Such games and other Hellenic practices introduced into Jerusalem were a cause of the Maccabean Revolt.

and settled in Alexandria. Others aligned with Syria to avoid the crushing consequences of war. These assimilated Jews largely became Hellenized with the passage of time, adopting the Greek culture and language.

*"But in these dark days, during which Palestine was "the Debatable Land," spoiled by her warring foes, there was always an election of grace, who held tightly to the now completed Scriptures of the Old Testament, embraced under three great heads, or divisions, viz., "The Law, the Prophets and the Psalms," and clung desperately to the apparently forlorn hope of the coming Deliverer."*¹⁰

The forging effects of this environment brought into focus certain groups and sects of the Jewish hierarchy.

The Hasidim

Toward the end of Persian rule, pious Jews had begun to assemble together and encourage one another in the Lord as Malachi attests:

"Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name." (Malachi 3:16)



Panathenaic prize amphora, ca. 530 B.C.
Attributed to the Euphiletos Painter
Greek, Attic
Terracotta; H. 25 in. (62.23 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Rogers Fund, 1914 (14.130.12)
www.metmuseum.org

"In this development we may with some confidence trace the origins of the *Hasidim*, the "godly people", who were to play such an important part in the religious crisis in Israel in the second century B.C. Their passionate devotion to the Torah is well illustrated in Psalm 119, the composition of an anonymous *Hasid* who has endured hardship and persecution for his loyalty to the divine "testimonies", but finds those testimonies a light to his path and sweeter than honey to his taste."¹¹

It is the *Hasidim* that would later rally to the cause of the Maccabean revolt. Under the reign of John Hyrcanus, this alliance was broken. It is at

this time the Pharisees begin to play a distinctive part in the historical record.¹² The name of the Pharisees (*perusim*, "separatists") may possibly be derived from this separation or split in the Hasmonaean (Maccabean) alliance.¹³

The Pharisees

Jaddua, the last high priest mentioned in the Old Testament, died shortly after the death of Alexander the Great. His son Onias I, of whom little is known died in B.C. 300 and was succeeded by his son, Simon the Just. Simon is portrayed by the Jewish historian Josephus and in the fiftieth chapter of the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus as a pious and consecrated priest. "Simon was one who sought to stem the Hellenizing or Grecianizing spirit, and to recall the people to that separation to God which would have been their strength had they known what it was to maintain it in holy humility."¹⁴

Simon presided over the Sanhedrin or High Council of the Jews, and was the first of the great Rabbis whose oral teaching was embodied in the *Mishna*, which nearly superseded the Word of God itself. That which began of pure motive quickly degenerated into the self-righteous religion of the Pharisees. These rigid separatists, embracing the letter of the law, became hard and externally formal in their attempt

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to harbor the truth in a sea of fleshly works.

"That Simon himself never contemplated this is evident; for, if tradition speaks truly, he it was who added the finishing touches to the work accredited to Ezra, and established authoritatively the canon of the Old Testament."¹⁵

Simon the Just died in 291 B.C. and was succeeded by his brother Eleazar early in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus. He died in 276 B.C. and rule transferred to his brother Manasseh, until his own decease in 251 B.C. He was succeeded by Onias II, the ignoble son of Simon the Just, who was an infant at his father's death. Simon II succeeded his father Onias II, and his son Onias III was the last to obtain the high priesthood by inheritance.

The Sadducees

Vis-a-vis the Pharisees, another dominant sect of a diametric character developed. The days of Simon II and Onias III witnessed the promotion of Grecian ways and customs.

*"In those days went there out of Israel wicked men, who persuaded many, saying, Let us go and make a covenant with the heathen that are round about us: for since we departed from them we have had much sorrow."*¹⁶

Greek philosophy, athletic games, and even tolerance of Greek idolatry were sanctioned by these

...the Jewish Scriptures were translated into Greek, paving the way for the communication of God's Word to the Gentile world.

This version, known as the *Septuagint LXX*, became the popular Bible of the Jews of the Dispersion...

and later priests. "These were the predecessors of the polished, but infidel Sadducees."¹⁷

maintained, and during this period its interpretation was developed in detail.¹⁹

Under the Ptolemies

Judea was part of the dominions of the Ptolemies until 198 B.C. In that year it changed hands, in consequence of a Seleucid victory won at Paneion, near one of the sources (spring of *Banyas*) of the river Jordan, and for the next fifty years and more it belonged to the Seleucid Empire.¹⁸

Numerous Jews in search of greater economic opportunity migrated south to join their exported kinsmen in Alexandria. The Jewish colonists were admitted to full citizenship and their influence in Alexandria was strong from the founding of the city. Their gifts helped to maintain the Jerusalem Temple and its administration by those who had remained in Judaea.

The Ptolemies allowed these native Jews a degree of autonomy, with the high priest acting as the governing officer of the community. The feast days were faithfully observed and attended by devout pilgrims from the whole world. The study of the law was zealously

Under the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus a significant event transpired. About the year 277 B.C., the Jewish Scriptures were translated into Greek, paving the way for the communication of God's Word to the gentile world.



Ptolemy II Philadelphus
• British Museum, London.

This version, known as the *Septuagint LXX*, became the popular Bible of the Jews of the Dispersion and was generally used by the writers of the New Testament.²⁰

Heavy taxation under Ptolemy's rule reduced much of the populace to servile poverty. During the reign of Ptolemy III Euergetes, Onias II the son of Simon the Just, neglected to pay annual tribute for several years. Ptolemy Euergetes threatened destruction of Jerusalem. Disaster was averted by the deceitful diplomacy of a nephew

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Ptolemy III Euergetes
* Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

of the high priest, Joseph, son of Tobias. Joseph bribed Euergetes into franchising him as "official tax farmer".

"As the servant of a foreign potentate, and under his protection, he enriched himself at the expense of his own people, grinding the faces of the poor, and extorting from them all he possibly could by taxes on their lands and goods, of which he kept for himself all that was over and above the yearly fee paid to the king of Egypt for the privilege.

*He was thus the first Jewish publican – the beginning of a detestable class in the eyes of all lovers of Israel, and put on the same level as the "sinners" of the nations, or even considered beneath them."*²¹

Scholars attribute this excessive taxation and alienation of the people during the late third century instrumental in the decline of Ptolemy power.

Under the Seleucids

Parallel with the progression of the Ptolemy dynasty in Egypt was the dominion of the Seleucidae in Syria. Repeated attempts to vanquish Ptolemy dominance of Palestine occurred under the

succession of Seleucid rulers. Although the first five Seleucid sovereigns failed in this objective, their influence remained potent in the political affairs of Palestine. Antiochus III the Great, the sixth of the Seleucidae, finally defeated the Egyptian army led by general Scopas at the previously mentioned battle of Paneion (201-198 B.C.).²²

Cleopatra, daughter of Antiochus III, was wedded to Ptolemy V Epiphanes in 193 B.C. This marriage resulted in a short lived treaty to share tax revenues between the two kingdoms.



* Antiochus III, "The Great," who defeated the Ptolemies at the Battle of Paneion in 198 B.C.

Antiochus III next proceeded to conquer the majority of islands along the Mediterranean coast. Impending prophecy then beckoned him home.

"Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found." (Daniel 11:19)

The expanding power of Rome brought conflict to the Seleucid dynasty. In 190 B.C. Antiochus III was soundly defeated at the battle of Magnesia. This loss cost the Seleucids their wealthy

provinces in Western Asia Minor and a crushing indemnity was imposed upon them, which was to be paid in twelve annual installments.²³ Antiochus III the Great died in shame.

"Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom: but within a few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle." (Daniel 11:20)

The burden of this Roman induced debt fell squarely on the shoulders of Seleucus IV Philopater, son of Antiochus III. He became the "raiser of taxes" as prophesied by Daniel.

A rift in Jewish party politics developed shortly after Judaea came under Seleucid domination. A group led by high priest Onias III, persisted in their allegiance to Egypt. Opposing them were the "tax farmers" of the house of Tobias whose more liberal interpretation of the law favored Syria. The followers of Onias III prevailed and unseated those of Tobias.

The Tobiads appealed to Seleucus IV and proposed that he raid the Temple treasury in order to ease his tax woes. Legend says that



* Seleucus IV Philopater, became the "raiser of taxes" as prophesied by Daniel.

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he sent his treasurer, Heliodorus, to Jerusalem to confiscate the Temple treasure, but a terrifying vision stopped him.²⁴ Seleucus IV was afterward poisoned by Heliodorus, who sought to be king.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes

"And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries." (Daniel 11:21)

"And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land." (Daniel 8:9)

Antiochus IV, who surnamed himself Epiphanes (the illustrious), uniquely fulfilled Daniel's eighth and eleventh chapter (see verses 11:21-35) predictions of the prototypical antichrist. The profane reign of this "vile little horn" quickly earned him the alias "Epimanes" (madman). His importance in prophetic Scripture is very significant and as will be evidenced his wickedness waxed exceedingly great toward the pleasant land.

Antiochus Epiphanes illegally seized the Seleucid throne from the son of his murdered brother. He bolstered the security of his position with flatteries and bribes. His master plan was the gross Hellenization and unification of his empire against the Roman threat. Only Judaea

resisted him in this, though some Jews acted "wickedly toward the covenant" (11:32), including murder of the "prince of the covenant" (11:22), high priest Onias III.²⁵

At this time Joshua, brother of godly Onias III, bribed Antiochus Epiphanes with four hundred and forty talents plus the promise of expedited Hellenization of the Jews in exchange for the office of high priest. Joshua discarded his noble name of birth and adopted the reprobate Greek form of Jason.

His own younger brother Onias, later outbid him for the coveted position and changed his name to Menelaus with the promise of going even farther down the road of apostasy. Menelaus had Onias III assassinated when the elder sternly rebuked him for robbing the Temple. Antiochus was forced to put the assassin to death in order to placate the populace that became furiously incensed over this outrage, while

the vile Menelaus escaped all condemnation.

"As time went by he became more and more abandoned, reveling in shameful iniquity, and guilty of horrible enormities – yet wearing the sacred mitre inscribed with "Holiness unto the Lord!"²⁶

After a successful invasion of Egypt in 169 B.C., Antiochus' plundered the Temple in Jerusalem and carried the spoils off to Antioch (11:28).²⁷ In 168 B.C., the Roman general Gaius Popillius Laenas, thwarted Antiochus Epiphanes second invasion of Egypt. Rome demanded him to cease his Egyptian campaign (Daniel 11:29-30). Rumors spread in Jerusalem that he was killed.

Enraged by his defeat and the news that Jerusalem was ecstatic at his presumed demise, he drove his armies back to engulf the holy land in a violent conflagration.

The Jerusalem city walls were stormed and 80,000 men, women,



Antiochus IV Epiphanes, tried to Hellenize the Jews, which led to the Maccabean War in 166 B.C. Tetradrachm Coin bears the inscription "King Antiochus god Manifest"

** JerusalemCoins.Com

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The Greek god Zeus Ammon became famous because Alexander the Great claimed to be his son. Originally god of the Libyan desert tribes at Siwa, later adopted by the Egyptians as their oracle deity Amun.

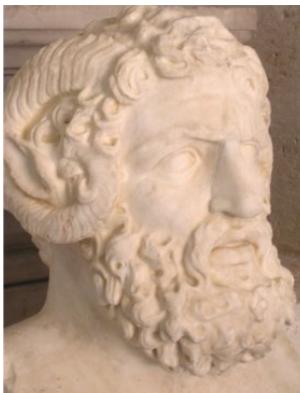
Jupiter, Roman equivalent of the Greek Zeus Ammon, was seen as the ruler of heaven and earth, king of the gods, god of thunder and lightning. Artifacts often depict Alexander and Antiochus IV with the "Horns of Zeus."

and children were massacred and led away as captives.²⁸ On December 15, 168 B.C., Antiochus the "madman" violated the Temple.

"Guided by the wretched apostate Menelaus, he forced his way in the Holiest of all, carried off the golden candlestick, the table, the incense altar, and other vessels; destroyed the books of the law, and set up the "abomination of desolation" by erecting an idol-altar upon the holy altar of burnt-offerings, upon which he sacrificed a great sow, and with a broth made of its unclean flesh, sprinkled and defiled all the temple."

*"The horror with which a godly Jew regarded this terrible desecration is almost beyond our conception. Never till the personal Antichrist sits in the temple of God yet to be erected in Jerusalem, in the days of the coming tribulation, will such dreadful scenes be repeated. Both are called by the same name."*²⁹

Idol altars and groves were erected everywhere and sacrifice to the heathen gods was made mandatory. The reading of the



Greek god Zeus Ammon with Horns
* Capitoline Museum, Rome.

Torah, circumcision, observance of the sabbath, and obedience of the law were forbidden under penalty of death.³⁰ Antiochus went so far as to mint coins that bore the inscription "theos epiphanes" (god manifest).³¹

Maccabean Revolt

It was against this backdrop of blasphemy that Mattathias, an honorable and great priest of the sons of Joarib and family of Hasmonaea, rose up in righteous defiance and taught the faithful to fight. The spark that lit the fire of his zeal ignited in his home town of Modi'in.

"And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits." (Daniel 11:32)

Antiochus had sent his officers to Modi'in to coerce Mattathias, who was the leader of strong sons and many brethren, with the pledge of much reward if he would forsake his convictions

and make sacrifice on the idol altar.

*"Then Mattathias answered and spake with a loud voice, Though all the nations that are under the king's dominion obey him, and fall away every one from the religion of their fathers, and give consent to his commandments: Yet will I and my sons and my brethren walk in the covenant of our fathers. God forbid that we should forsake the law and the ordinances. We will not hearken to the king's words, to go from our religion, either on the right hand, or the left."*³²

At the completion of Mattathias's protest, and with abhorrent apathy, a heretic Jew stepped forward in the sight of all to offer the obscene sacrifice.

*"Which thing when Mattathias saw, he was inflamed with zeal, and his reins trembled, neither could he forbear to shew his anger according to judgment: wherefore he ran, and slew him upon the altar. Also the king's commissioner, who compelled men to sacrifice, he killed at that time, and the altar he pulled down. Thus dealt he zealously for the law of God, like as Phinees did unto Zambri the son of Salom. And Mattathias cried throughout the city with a loud voice, saying, Whosoever is zealous of the law, and maintaineth the covenant, let him follow me. So he and his sons fled into the mountains, and left all that ever they had in the city."*³³

Such was the beginning of the Maccabean revolt. Mattathias had five sons: Johanan, Simon, Judah (who was called Maccabeus

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"the hammer", after which the family was famed - see *Jeremiah 23:29*), Eleazar, and Jonathan. Devout Jews known as the *Hasidim* rallied to the cause and joined in the battle. At first the Maccabees suffered reversal.

Weary of years and war, Mattathias the patriarch, urged his sons to persevere till the Temple be cleansed and then died in 166 B.C. The torch of combat passed to *Judah the Maccabee*.

*"It is no hard matter for many to be shut up in the hands of a few; and with the God of heaven it is all one, to deliver with a great multitude, or a small company: For the victory of battle standeth not in the multitude of an host; but strength cometh from heaven."*³⁴

It was with this cry that Judah, full of faith, led the few into victorious battle with the Syrians. Defeat of the strong Syrian detachment at Beth-horon (in 165 B.C.) surprised Antiochus who quickly raised an enormous prepaid army of mercenaries and placed them under the command of general Lysias. In a short but decisive campaign Judah twice whipped this bloated battalion and expelled the Syrians from Jerusalem.

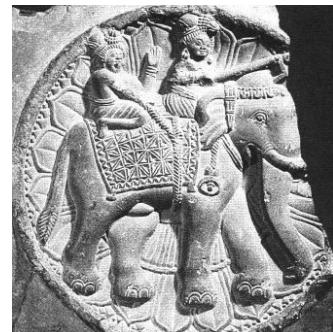
In 164 B.C., the eleventh year of his rule, Antiochus became deathly ill. Still in shock, less than year after his defeat by Judah, "Antiochus IV Epiphanes died a horrible death, raving in

madness and foul with an evil disease that rotted the flesh upon his bones while life was yet in his filthy body."³⁵

Daniel's prophecy (8:14) and Mattathias's deathbed desire were realized after 2,300 days of defilement. The Temple was first polluted in 171 B.C., and in 165 and 164, the holy place purified and services re-established. A new altar was built and the Temple repaired, renovated and readied for rededication. "This took place on the 25th Kislev, 165 B.C., exactly three years from the day when the first offering had been made on the altar to *Jupiter* (Roman name of the Greek *Zeus Ammon*), and some six and a half years after it had been first polluted by Antiochus."³⁶

The Temple was commemorated with a new feast, the "Feast of the Dedication" (see *John 10:22*, variously called the Feast of Lights), "an event celebrated as *Hanukkah* by the Jewish community ever since."³⁷

In the years following, Judah worked to rebuild the cities and fortify Mount Zion. Antiochus Epiphanes was succeeded by his nine year-old son, Antiochus Eupator. General Lysias, the old nemesis reinvaded Palestine and the Jews suffered a reverse. In one of the battles, the mighty Eleazar, was crushed to death by a war elephant. At this interlude, Judah's faith faltered and he looked to the arm of flesh. He formed a Roman alliance, which



Mighty Eleazar, was crushed to death by a war elephant like the one pictured in this relief.

* Found at Mathura, India, dating from the second century B.C.

eventually caused Judaea to be annexed as a Roman province.

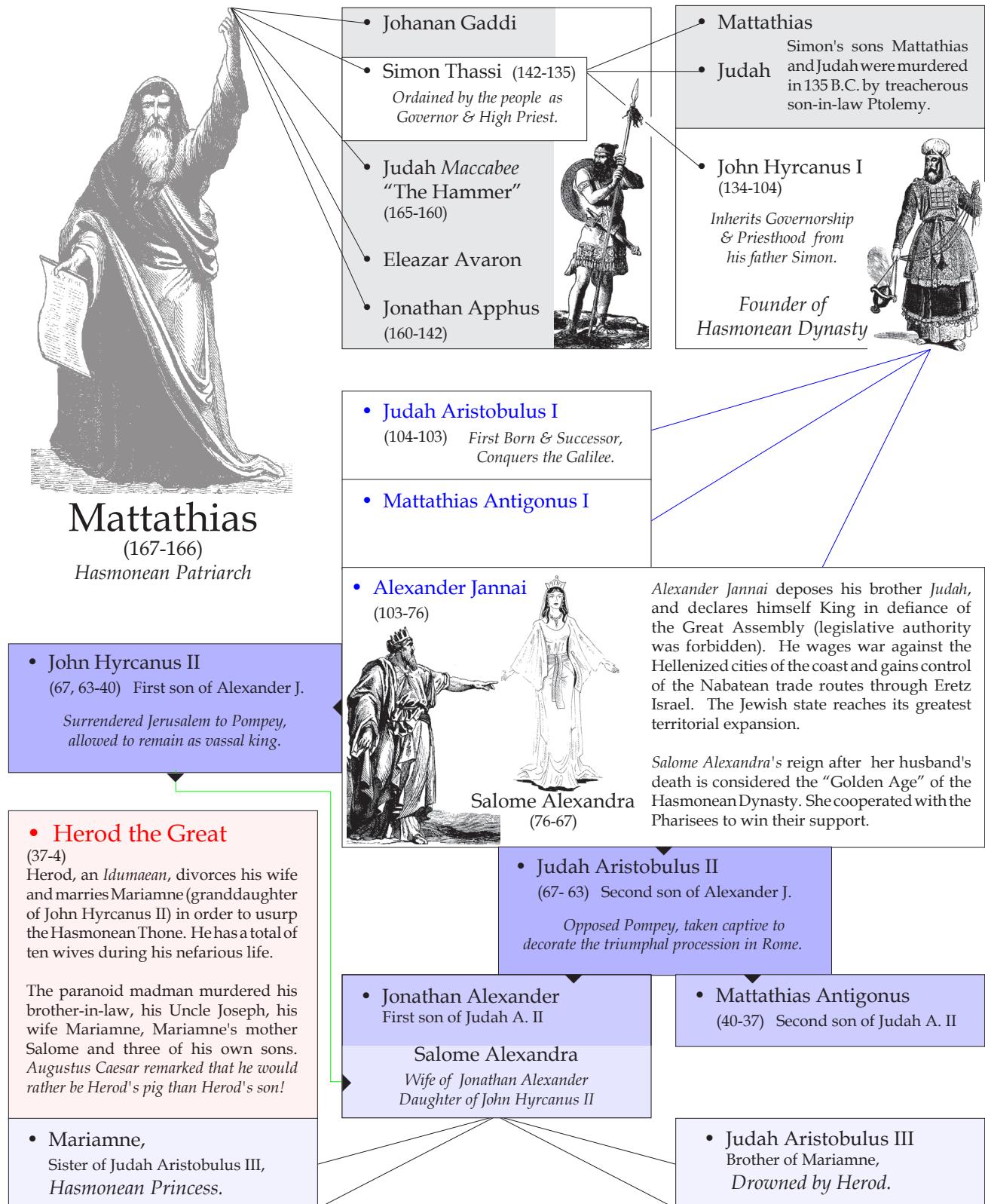
In 161 B.C., Judah "the hammer of God", was killed in battle. Jonathan at once became captain of the cause. The Maccabean ideal was again tarnished when Jonathan accepted the high priesthood from Alexander Balas, pretender to the Syrian throne. After seventeen years, Jonathan was treacherously murdered by a traitorous commander. Thus, the war dragged on until 143 B.C., when his brother Simon, allied with Demetrius II, contestant for the Syrian crown. In 142 B.C. national independence was awarded to Simon by Demetrius and the struggles of the Maccabees had ended.

"The victory of the Maccabees really terminated the influence of the Seleucidae in Palestine and gave virtual autonomy to the Jewish state until the advent of the Romans. Nevertheless, the effect of the Seleucid domination

Four Hundred Silent Years

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THE HASMONEANS (167-37 B.C.)



Four Hundred Silent Years



Demetrius II, youthful portrait at the time of his first Reign (145-140 B.C.)
** JerusalemCoins.Com

"King Demetrius to Simon, the high priest, and friend of kings, as also unto the elders and nation of the Jews, sendeth greeting: The golden crown, and the scarlet robe, which ye sent unto us, we have received and we are ready to make a stedfast peace with you..."
(I Maccabees 13:36-37)

was tremendous. Its Hellenizing pressure consolidated the Jews into a resistance group jealous of its national life and practically indissoluble among the nations through whom it was scattered.³⁸

Hasmonaean Dynasty

Following the liberation of Palestine, Simon enjoyed a brief but prosperous reign. The exuberant people ordained Simon as governor and high priest forever, "until there should arise a faithful prophet" (I Maccabees 14:41). Rome endorsed a treaty with the Jewish state in 139 B.C., confirming its independence with a promise of friendship. The Jews enjoyed economic and religious prosperity, but at a

price. As evidenced late in the Maccabean struggle a distressing trend of moral deterioration had begun.

Syrian instability caused by internal strife and external war with the Parthians, momentarily threatened Jewish peace. Simon's two sons, Judah and John took decisive action and disaster was averted. Tragically, Simon and his sons Judah and Mattathias were murdered in 135 B.C. by Ptolemy, a treacherous son-in-law. John

Hyrcanus's eldest son, Judah Aristobulus I, imprisoned his mother and brothers to avoid sharing his father's throne. His greed for power purchased a scant one year reign. Salome Alexandra, his widow, married his next surviving brother, Alexander Jannai who took the title of "king".

Jannai's rule lasted until 76 B.C. and was marked by civil turmoil and vandalism of adjacent territories. His geographic



Hasmonean coin minted during the rule of John Hyrcanus I.
Obverse: a Palm Branch with four lines of Hebrew that reads
"Yehohanan the High Priest and Council of the Jews".
Reverse: a Lily. ** JerusalemCoins.Com



Hyrcanus I, Simon's remaining son, successfully defended the throne and Ptolemy fled to Egypt. Hyrcanus perpetuated his father's role of high priest and governor and became founder of the Hasmonaean dynasty.³⁹

When Antiochus VII, brother and successor to Demetrius II died, Syria was plunged into civil war. Hyrcanus seized this opportunity to expand the borders of the Jewish state by repossessing Idumaea, Samaria and part of Galilee. In 104 B.C., John Hyrcanus died.

conquests enlarged the borders of Judaea until it surpassed the combined provinces of David and Solomon. These conquests were not motivated by a holy zeal as had been the case with his ancestors, but was solely a quest of personal ambition and pride.

"In his unquenchable thirst for this way of life he hazarded his nation's independence more than once, exhausted the national wealth, and forfeited the respect and goodwill of the best elements in the nation."⁴⁰

Four Hundred Silent Years

Salome Alexandra assumed civil rule as queen after her husband's decease and reigned until her death in 67 B.C. Rabbinical tradition records her nine year administration as a momentary golden age for the Pharisaical order. She reversed the massacre and oppression that the Pharisees had experienced at the hand of her husband and raised them to a position of great influence in the realm.⁴¹

Salome's son, Aristobulus II, became king and promptly attempted to dispossess his elder brother, Hyrcanus II, of the high priesthood. Civil war erupted between the two Hasmonaean brothers, providing a convenient pretext for Roman intervention. Daniel's prophecy was to again constrain the alignment of historical events.

Roman Conquest

"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns." (Daniel 7:7)

It was at this juncture that Gnaeus Pompeius (Pompey) Magnus, authorized commander of all Roman forces by the Roman Senate, had just reduced Syria to a Roman province. The Maccabees earlier flirtation with



Gnaeus Pompeius (Pompey) Magnus
* Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek
Copenhagen, Denmark.

Rome was now consummated in formal annexation. Pompey attacked Jerusalem in 63 B.C., and converted the independent Jewish state into a subservient realm of Rome. Aristobulus II futilely opposed Pompey and was taken captive to Rome to decorate the triumphal procession. His brother Hyrcanus II was allowed to remain as vassal king in view of his willing surrender of Jerusalem.

In reality, the power behind the Hyrcanus II regime was a clever *Idumaean* (or *Edomite*, long time enemy of the Jews) politician named Antipater. Cooperation with Rome was the most expedient way to advance his own position. Hyrcanus II played puppet while Antipater pulled the political strings that moved the regime towards Roman favor.

Idumaean Usurper

The civil war between Pompey and Caesar in 48 B.C. provided the opportunity for Antipater to realize his goal. The Hyrcanus government provided strategic aid to Caesar, who compensated Antipater with Roman citizenship and the title of procurator of Judaea.

Antipater appointed his own sons, Phasael and Herod, as prefects of Jerusalem and Galilee respectively. Antipater was assassinated in 43 B.C., but his sons continued the lecherous legacy. Herod possessed his father's ability and was able to maintain political power and favor with the constant succession of Roman rulers. In 42 B.C., Mark Antony appointed Phasael and Herod as joint-tetrarchs of Judaea.⁴³

In 40 B.C., the Parthians overran Syria and Judaea and placed Mattathias Antigonus, the remaining Hasmonaean son of Aristobulus II, who was backed by the Sadducean party, on the throne in Jerusalem as priest-king of the Jews.⁴⁴ Phasael was captured and killed, but Herod escaped with his mother Cyprus, his sister Salome, and his fiancee Mariamne (granddaughter of Hyrcanus II) by way of the Dead Sea, where he left them at the fortress of Masada. He sailed on to Rome and convinced Antony and Octavian to have the Roman Senate declare him "king of the Jews."

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Herod, with the aid of Roman troops, recaptured Jerusalem in October of 37 B.C., after a three month siege. Antony ordered the execution of Antigonus at the request of Herod. Thus, with the beheading of Antigonus came the end of the Hasmonaean dynasty and the Idumaean usurpation of the Judaean throne.

Antipater began the Herodian dynasty, but his son Herod, called the Great, pinnacled its wickedness. He murdered his brother in-law Aristobulus III, his wife's uncle Joseph, his wife's grandfather Hyrcanus II (who had supported him in his rise to power), his own wife Mariamne, and his own sons Alexander and Aristobulus. Not surprisingly, Herod the Great, "king of the Jews", sought the destruction of the predicted Messiah with a jealous fury.

"Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not." (Matthew 2:16-18)

"The beginning of the gospel of *Yeshua HaMashiach*, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; And preached, saying, *There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit.*" (Mark 1:1-8)

"Smitten with dropsy and cancer of the intestines, and haunted by the memory of his murders, Herod died on April 1, 4 B.C."⁴⁵

Culmination

Despite evil empires and the monstrous manipulations of madmen, God saw his remnant of people through this tumultuous time. Paradoxically, the *silent years* speak loud and clear about the providence of God.

The important epoch between the testaments of Scripture are over, but a new day is dawning, a time of fulfillment. The Lord is about to speak to his people again.



Four Hundred Silent Years

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• Bust of Alexander the Great,
found on the Greek Isle of Thasos in the Aegean Sea.



* Gold coin of Alexander the Great, struck at Babylon.

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